

["Blue John" and Pony]

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by

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From F. C. by Mrs. Letitia Charlton, V. A.

Pioneer Experiences of Side Saddle Days EDWARD COUNTY, DIST. #10

"BLUE JOHN" and PONY.

He was a buckskin with black points. He was medium size, beautifully formed and very graceful. He was so gentle he seemed a deadhead when wandering about the ranch. Who had trained him, I dont know. My brother bought him when the animal was three years old. He could singlefoot, pace or trot.

His one great passion was running cattle. Every cattleman near him knew him to be the best horse in that section. When on a round-up and each man was separating his cattle from the others, Pony would work tirelessly whirling, turning and tossing his head at everyone disposed of.

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My sisters and I rode him everywhere. But later on, he developed a quality, arising from his being high strung, that made him exceedingly hard headed. At times, becoming excited, he would take the bit in his teeth and do as he pleased unless he was ridden by a man and sometimes then he would give the fellow quite a ride before he could pull the horse down.

The country was all open then. There were no pasture fences. My father's ranch at this time was fifteen miles north of Barksdale in Edwards County, on Cedar Creek. It was the roughest, country imaginable. There were thick groves of cedar trees every few hundred yards. A winding road ran through the creek around immense boulders and then cedars with now and then, a tiny, grassy plot and then more cedars.

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Into this section had wandered a large, blue, steer. He belonged to some ranchman further west. He was a longhorn, rather heavy and an utter outlaw when it came to putting him into a corral.

My sisters and I had named him "Blue John." He showed no disposition to fight. On the contrary, he always ran at sight of mankind.

One morning my father, pressed for help, told me to saddle Pony and go to town for some important mail he was expecting. Hurriedly, he warned me to go around all cattle on the first part of the trip — that was, until Pony became too tired to be "peppy."

I started off riding one of those foolish oldtime side saddles. It was held in place by a girth and a circingle.

I watched for cattle. Pony kept tossing his head impatiently. Suddenly, it happened. There was Blue John about twenty feet away.

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The steer snorted and turned to run. Then began for me a gruelling experience. Pony took the bridle bit in his teeth and in high glee, followed Blue John in spite of all I could do. The first leap he made caused the saddle blanket to start slipping. Remember, I was riding a side saddle.

Blue John took to the cedar brake. Pony enthusiastically followed. A short time after, the blanket went and thereafter, it required all my wits to keep the saddle from slipping. I knew not what direction we were taking. All my time was taken up in keeping the saddle on the horse's back. In fact, I did not ride the horse, I rode the saddle. Sometimes it was on Pony's withers and sometimes on his hips. I saw nothings and knew nothing but trying to hold that saddle in place. Still, there was no abating of the chase. Down hills, over mountain points, across slippery rocks we went. I was growing exhausted. My long hair became unbraided and whipped around projecting limbs of trees but I jerked it loose, losing many strands.

Down a hill through dangerous limbs of cedars we went. At last, we came to a road. I was too exhausted to recognize it. And then we reached my father's 3 field fence. Dimly, I seemed to remember it but I was too tired and uncertain of the outcome of this impromptu chase. As we went over the last rise and down it I saw father hurry to open the corral gate. He knew the danger beyond the corral. The country above was too wild for swift riding.

Blue John went into the corral. I had penned him!

Father helped me from the horse and the saddle came off with me.

"I should not have sent you on that horse," he said, regretfully. I didn't answer. My hair was full of cedar sprigs, my dress was torn to shreds. Mother bound up my wounds and fed me.

"Say, young lady," said my father presently, "did you know you penned Blue John?"

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"Panned nothing!" I said disgustedly. "It was that horse. He could pen an antelope!" Dear little Pony.